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A Brief History

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The Royal Tank Corps

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A BRIEF HISTORY

OF

THE ROYAL TANK CORPS

BY

F. G. WOOLNOUGH, L.C.P.

Army Educational Corps

SECOND EDITION.

ALDERSHOT

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PREFACE

THIS brief War History of the Royal Tank Corps—which is also almost its entire history—has been collected from various sources in order to enable a recruit to become acquainted with the principal deeds of arms performed by the tank, to aid in the fostering of *esprit de corps*, and to show how some of the individual members of our nation persevered, in the face of many difficulties, to give our Army that weapon which triumphantly solved the problem of movement on the Western Front.

It will serve recruits of the Royal Tank Corps as a textbook in regimental history, a subject of outstanding importance in the syllabus of the Third Class Certificate of Education.

Many deeds of heroism have been purposely omitted from this brief record. They may be read in back numbers of "The Royal Tank Corps Journal," in Colonel Fuller's "Tanks in the Great War," and in "The Tank Corps," by Major C. Williams-Ellis and A. Williams-Ellis . . . from which sources most of the matter of this book has been gathered.

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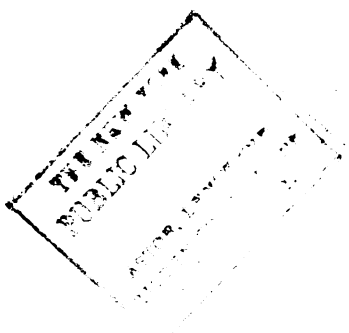
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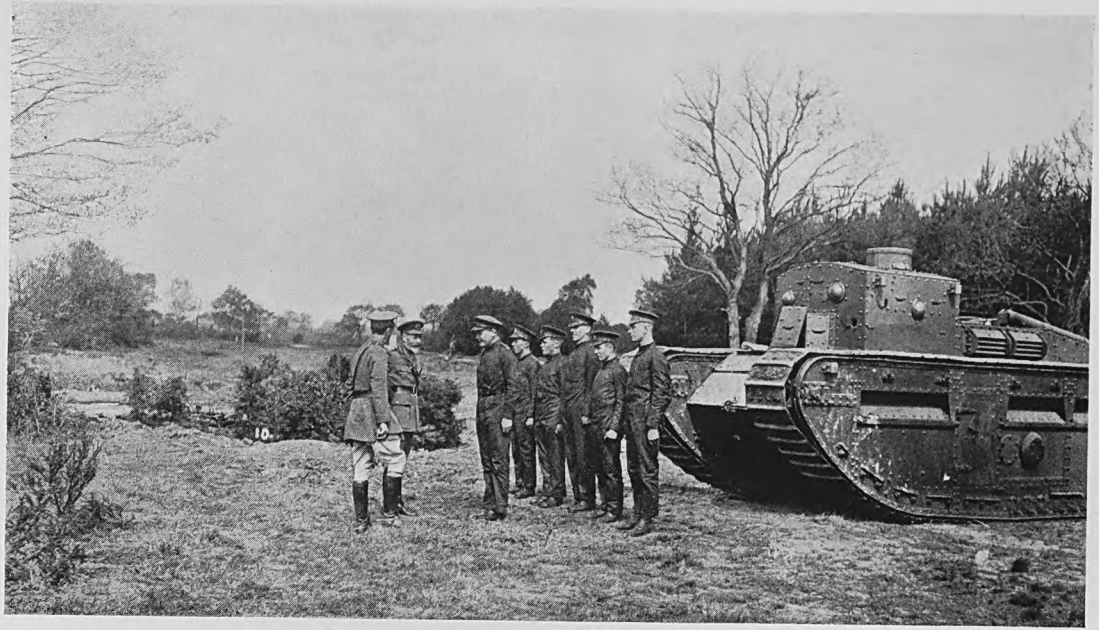

OUR COLONEL-IN-CHIEF.

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A BRIEF HISTORY
OF
THE ROYAL TANK CORPS

1. The Origin of the Tank.

"THERE is nothing new under the sun" is a well-worn saying, yet as true in its application to the idea responsible for the production of the tank as in most other cases.

In attack, Julius Cæsar frequently employed a special formation of troops—the "testudo"—in which the men of the front rank held their shields in front, the remaining men locking theirs over their heads, opposing a veritable "tortoise-shell" to volleys of missiles. When besieging a stubbornly-held city, he made use of wheeled towers several stories high, from which missiles could be discharged at short range upon the garrison, while battering-rams were worked below. In Britain, Cæsar's troops were opposed by Britons in war chariots; long scythe-like blades fixed to the axles formed formidable weapons.

The knight of the Middle Ages was almost entirely invulnerable in his casement of armour. The discovery and application of gunpowder, while it led to the disappearance of body armour, led to other defensive devices being adopted—the fortification, the trench, the use of "dead" ground for the purpose of shielding troops from fire, and so on.

On the sea, the wooden walls of Nelson's days have slowly been converted into the armour-plated battleships of the present, every advance in the science of

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armour-piercing being responded to by the ship-builder.

In the three cases referred to above, the principle held in mind was to defend an attacker during his operations, and that principle is the predominant one in the case of the tank—to hit without being hit.

During the Great War the series of rapid manœuvres which constituted the open warfare period terminated towards the latter part of the autumn of 1914, and gave place to a much more protracted period of trench warfare. The combination of trench, machine gun, and wire, all defensive, gave such an overwhelming advantage to the defender that each offensive operation was planned and attempted in vain.

Three outstanding methods were adopted, in the order named, to break down defence—artillery, gas, and the tank.

The first phase saw all armies multiplying batteries to an hitherto unheard of extent. Attacks were preceded by bombardments which were devastating in their results, yet had those results neutralized by factors which could not be dissociated from them. Though hostile trenches and wire were rendered non-effective, the element of surprise—always a most powerful factor in war—had been sacrificed, and, furthermore, the shelled areas were so torn that methodical advance over them was impossible.

The second method—gas—was initially employed by the Germans during the Second Battle of Ypres, and gained success then because our troops possessed no antidote. Given sufficient gas and a favourable wind, it seems clear that great advantages would be in the hands of an attacking force. Germany employed gas before large quantities were available, and was denied the second factor—a favourable wind—on the Western Front. The gas-mask neutralized the efforts of the German chemist, and our own gas attacks were

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generally more successful in their results than were those of the enemy.

July 1st, 1916, will long be remembered in connection with the ill-fated Battle of the Somme. Our swollen casualty lists demonstrated in fearful fashion how defence was still superior to attack, even when made by the best fighting men.

During the autumn of 1914, armoured cars had been employed by us with considerable success in North-West France and Belgium. Their success may have caused alert minds to investigate the possibilities of expanding their power and capabilities. In October, 1914, Colonel E. D. Swinton suggested the introduction of an armoured car fitted with " caterpillar " wheels, and capable of crossing trenches and of flattening wire entanglements. In November of the same year, Captain T. Tulloch, of the Chilworth Powder Company, communicated with Colonel Swinton and with Colonel Hankey, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and, at a later date, with Mr. Winston Churchill, relative to the possibility of constructing a land cruiser sufficiently armoured to enable it to penetrate defensive works. Mr. Churchill, in January, 1915, brought the idea to the notice of Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister, in very emphatic terms, and in the same month Colonel Swinton again represented his ideas to the War Office, but no action was taken. In June, 1915, the Colonel was successful in inducing Sir John French to give his official support to the suggestion.

Meanwhile, the Admiralty had been active. A Landships Committee had been formed under Mr. D'Eyncourt. Mr. Tritton and Lieutenant W. G. Wilson were two of the experts entrusted with the work of preparing designs of both a wheel and a caterpillar armoured tractor. Colonel Swinton's original specification was adopted as a basis, and in

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June, 1915, a design was evolved which eventually gave the first or Mark I Tank.

In June, 1915, was taken the important step of uniting the experimental work of the War Office and that of the Admiralty, and a joint Naval and Military Committee came into existence. This committee caused an experimental land cruiser to be constructed on the lines of the machine designed by Mr. Tritton and Lieutenant Wilson, and in January, 1916, it was completed. Representatives of the Army Council and of General Headquarters, France, witnessed a trial of it at Hatfield in February, and in the following month it was decided to form a small unit of the Machine Gun Corps, to be named the " Heavy Section." Colonel E. D. Swinton was placed in command, and a training camp was established at Bisley, being moved afterwards to Elvedon near Thetford. Junior officers were posted from the cadets of the 18th, 19th, and 21st Royal Fusiliers, other officers and men from the M.M.G.C., and drivers from the Mechanical Transport, A.S.C.

On August 13th, 1916, the first detachment of thirteen tanks left Thetford for France, to be followed eight days later by twelve more. By the end of the month, two complete companies, " C " and " D," had crossed, and were encamped in a training centre at Yvrench, near Abbeville, under Lieut.-Colonel Brough. He, having organized the final training, returned to England, and Lieut.-Colonel R. W. Bradley assumed command of what was now known as the Heavy Section, Machine Gun Corps.

G.H.Q. had decided to employ tanks in the next great attack in the Somme battle, and the two companies were accordingly moved forward to a position near Bray-sur-Somme.

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2. The Mark I Tank.

The Mark I Tank was "a mechanically-propelled cross-country armoured battery," 26 ft. 6 ins. long, 12 ft. 9 ins. or 10 ft. 5 ins. wide and 8 ft. 1 in. high. It weighed approximately 26 tons, had a Daimler engine of 105 horse-power, and had a maximum thickness of armour of 12 millimetres (almost half an inch).

The three main characteristics of all tanks are, in general terms, mobility, security, and offensive power, and in connection with this first type it may be noted:—

Mobility: The tank could travel over flat ground at one hundred to one hundred and twenty yards per minute, over ground intersected by trenches, at thirty to forty yards per minute, and at night at fifteen yards per minute. It could span a trench nine feet wide, and surmount an obstacle five feet high.

Security: It was proof against ordinary bullets, shrapnel, and most shell splinters.

Offensive Power: The "male" type carried two 6-pounder guns and four Hotchkiss machine guns, for which were 160 shells and 1,500 rounds S.A.A. respectively, while the "female" was armed with machine guns only—five Vickers and one Hotchkiss, carrying for them 7,800 rounds S.A.A.

The disadvantages of the Mark I Tank were principally those affecting mobility. Ten miles was about as far as it could travel without replenishing its fuel, and its crew could not exist in it during action much beyond ten hours. For steering purposes, it was fitted with a tail consisting of two large and heavy wheels. The fittings of these gave much trouble, and they were extremely vulnerable to shell fire. Observation inside was so bad that efficient fire control was impossible.

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3. Battle of the Somme, July, 1916.

The Battle of the Somme had opened on the first of the month. On our right, between Maricourt and Ovillers, a successful advance had been made; on our left, between Ovillers and Gommecourt, we had been checked. No further advance in this latter area was attempted until November. The district lying between the Somme and the Ancre is broken into strongly-marked valleys, and in 1916 these were so powerful a natural defensive line that a heavy artillery bombardment was always regarded as an essential preliminary to any attack. The ground was consequently severely "crumped."

A total of fifty-nine tanks was available. These were distributed as follows:—

Fourth Army: XIV Corps, 17; XV Corps, 17; III Corps, 8.

Reserve Army: 7; G.H.Q. Reserve (unsound machines), 10.

The Fourth Army was to attack between the Combles Ravine and Martinpuich; the Reserve Army was to fight on its left, and the French on its right.

The tanks moved up to their starting points during the night of September 14/15th. Seventeen became non-effective on the way, either being ditched or breaking down mechanically. Those operating with the XV Corps in the centre alone rendered service which proved valuable not only in point of actual worth in battle, but as a demonstration from which lessons could be learnt. The tanks allotted to this corps moved forward from various starting points near Delville Wood. Eight were to advance on the west of Flers, and six on the east of that village, Gueudecourt, and a sunken road to the west of it being their destination. Each tank had its own detailed route and time-table. Twelve machines moved off, eleven reaching the hostile trenches.

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When our infantry was held up in front of the Flers line by wire and machine-gun fire, one tank was placed astride a trench, enfiladed it, then collected 300 Germans who surrendered. Another tank entered Gueudecourt and attacked an enemy battery with its 6-pounders, destroying one gun of the battery, and then itself receiving a direct hit which caused it to catch fire.

Tanks went into action for the second time on September 25th and 26th. Of thirteen employed, nine were ditched in shell holes, two gave valuable assistance to the infantry engaged in assaulting Thiepval before suffering the same fate, while one of the remaining pair, more fortunate than its comrades, performed deeds which have become famous. It was detailed to assist the 64th Brigade (21st Division), in an attack on Gird Trench, near Gueudecourt. The brigade had obtained footholds in the line at two places, but between them existed 1,500 yards of trench, strongly held and protected by uncut wire. The tank—a female—started at 6.30 a.m. to move along the trench, sweeping it with machine-gun fire, and flattening the wire. As the tank moved along, the enemy surrendered to the following infantry. By 8.30 a.m. the whole length had been cleared and occupied by us. The infantry then advanced towards their final objective, being accorded very welcome assistance by the tank. During the capture of the trench, 370 Germans surrendered, and a large number was killed. Our casualties numbered five.

The third occasion on which tanks were employed occurred during the last of the 1916 Somme operations, still in the Ancre area. Heavy rain had converted the already difficult ground into a morass of mud, and an originally extensive programme was reduced to one in which only nine tanks figured. On November 13th, during the attack near St. Pierre Divion, all three tanks operating came to grief in the mud. Two others,

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assisting in the attack on Beaumont Hamel, were also ditched. On the following day, three machines were sent to eliminate a strong point to the south of Beaumont Hamel. One was put out of action by a direct hit, and the others were ditched on arriving at the German front line.

Nevertheless, they brought their guns to bear on the stronghold and kept up such a well-directed fire that the garrison of 400 men surrendered.

The results of the three preceding actions may be summarized as follows :—

1. In principle, the tank was a sound fighting machine.
2. Mechanical improvements were not only desirable but necessary.
3. Generally, commanders of other units were unable to employ tanks to the best advantage, for they knew little about them.
4. Crews required very thorough and careful training.
5. Careful preparation and reconnaissance were absolutely necessary to make tank operations successful.
6. Efficient supervision in battle demanded a good system of communication
7. A separate supply organization was necessary to maintain tanks in action.
8. Tanks drew much fire away from our infantry, and raised their morale, at the same time lowering that of the enemy's troops.

4. Organization.

On September 29th, 1916, Lieut.-Colonel H. J. Elles, D.S.O., was appointed Colonel Commanding the Heavy Section, Machine Gun Corps, and on the same day the decision to build a thousand tanks was made. The Heavy Section was at that time composed of four companies—"A," "B," "C," and "D"—each company

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containing four sections, each of six tanks, with one spare tank per company = $(4 \times 4 \times 6) + 4 = 100$ Each section contained three male and three female machines, each having a crew of one officer and six other ranks.

In October, 1916, the Tank Training Centre at Wool became a separate establishment, a depot to feed the fighting units. The four companies in France were converted into four battalions—still "A," "B," "C," and "D" of the Heavy Branch, Machine Gun Corps—and sanction given for the raising of five new battalions at home. The nine battalions were grouped into three brigades. Each battalion consisted of three companies, each company of four fighting sections, and a headquarter section; the former had five, the latter, eight tanks.

Early in 1917, the number of tanks per battalion was reduced, first from 72 to 60, and then to 48.

As a result of the work done by tanks in the Battle of Arras (April, 1917), it was proposed to increase the number of battalions to eighteen, and this expansion was authorized on June 28th. An alteration of the title to "The Tank Corps" was also made on this date.

Unfortunately, the expansion was held up owing to the heavy demands made by the infantry for recruits, but in November it was again sanctioned. On this occasion, the opportunity was taken to substitute brigade workshops for those previously operated by battalions. The last of the eighteen battalions proceeded to France in September, 1918. For operations in 1919, it was proposed to increase the number of battalions to 34, involving the employment of no less than six thousand tanks, but this was rendered unnecessary by the events of 1918.

5. The Battle of Arras, April, 1917.

In 1917, the German front presented two salients which, if attacks on them were successful, promised to yield substantial results to the Allies.

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The first was a huge one, running along the line Ostend—Noyon—Nancy, and having behind it two main lines of communication based on Valenciennes and Mesieres. The second was a smaller one, forming an offshoot of the first, and embracing Arras, Gommecourt, and Morval, having Queant in its interior. Near this latter town, the German Sixth and First Armies met, and at their point of juncture each could be struck. An attack on this second salient, if successful, would threaten Valenciennes, and also cause such a diversion of German reserves that the French might be able to seize Mesieres.

Towards the end of February it was evident that the Germans intended to abandon the angle between Arras and Craonne—part of the Gommecourt Salient—and to fall back to a better and greatly strengthened position.

In our attack, the main blow was to be struck in the Soissons—Rheims area, and it was important to weaken the defence here by making it necessary for the enemy to send his reserves to the Drocourt—Queant line. Yet this line should be pierced by us before the arrival of those reserves . . . hence time was an important factor. Tanks, it was decided, should assist in gaining this time, and the sixty machines available were distributed as follows :—

8 (of " D " Bn.) to the First Army to operate against Vimy Ridge and Thelus.
40 (of " C " Bn.) to the Third Army to operate in the Scarpe Valley.
12 (of " D " Bn.) to the Fifth Army to operate on the right of the Third Army.

Unfortunately, heavy rain fell during the early hours of the morning of April 9th, and the First Army tanks became engulfed in the sodden ground about five hundred yards from the German line. The Canadians, under the shelter of a most efficient artillery

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Map 1.

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barrage, took Vimy Ridge, and several thousand prisoners, and so the absence of the tanks did not materially affect the fortunes of the day.

Of eight tanks operating north of the Scarpe, four were ditched, one was rendered non-effective by shell fire, but the remaining three worked their way along the valley, busily engaged with hostile machine-gun nests. Those working south of the river had varied fortunes; the ground had been heavily shelled, and two feet of water existed in some trenches.

On April 11th, three important tank attacks were made:—

1. This was a successful action conducted by six machines against Monchy. Three only reached the town, but they ensured its occupation by the infantry, and, had they been able to continue action, further advance would have been possible.

2. Four tanks from Neuville—Vitasse worked down the Siegfried line to Heninel, then turned to Wancourt, and were in action here, alone, for several hours. All four returned in safety, after causing large numbers of casualties.

3. Eleven tanks led an attack on Bullecourt. Those working on the wings were soon put out of action by artillery fire, but in the centre, two succeeded in piloting the infantry into the villages of Reincourt and Hendecourt. Tank tracks in the snow stood out sharply. The Australian infantry, wading through the snow, took to the tracks, and both machines and men thus offered excellent targets to German artillery. Our flanks were driven in by a counter-attack, the villages retaken by the enemy, and the tanks and infantry captured. This was a piece of bad luck, for not only did it cause the Australians to regard tanks as being unreliable, but the Germans were able to note that their new armour-piercing bullets would pierce the side of a tank, and they accordingly issued these bullets to all troops.

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The interest in the Bullecourt operation lies in the fact that it was the first occasion on which tanks were used to replace artillery in the work of dealing with wire, and of creating a defensive barrage for our infantry.

6. Second Battle of Gaza, April 17th, 1917.

The success achieved by Tanks on the Somme in 1916 led to the despatch of eight machines to Egypt, for employment against the Turks. Through an error, old experimental machines were sent, instead of new ones. A detachment of 22 officers and 226 other ranks arrived in Egypt in January, 1917, and passed on to Khan Yenus, near El Arish.

The first Battle of Gaza had ended with a Turkish move which threatened our lines of communication, and forced a retirement to the south of Gaza. The Turks, about 30,000 strong, were holding a line Gaza—Hariera—Sheika, about sixteen miles in length.

For the second attack on this line, the 52nd, 53rd, and 54th Divisions were employed, tanks being allotted to each. Those with the first-named divisions were not required—the enemy was completely surprised by the infantry attack and abandoned his position. Of the two operating with the 54th Division, one was destroyed by a direct hit, but the other cleared trenches behind the Sheikh Abbas Ridge, which commanded Gaza, and thus allowed the infantry to consolidate there. On the evening of April 17th, the three attacking divisions held a line running from the coast to Heart Hill, Kurd Hill, Mansura Abbas, and Atawinch Ridge.

The second phase of the battle began on the morning of the 19th. While the Australian Corps attacked the eastern defences of Gaza, the other three divisions were to make the main assault on Ali El Muntar. The 52nd, 53rd, and 54th Divisions had, respectively, four, two, and one tanks allotted to them.

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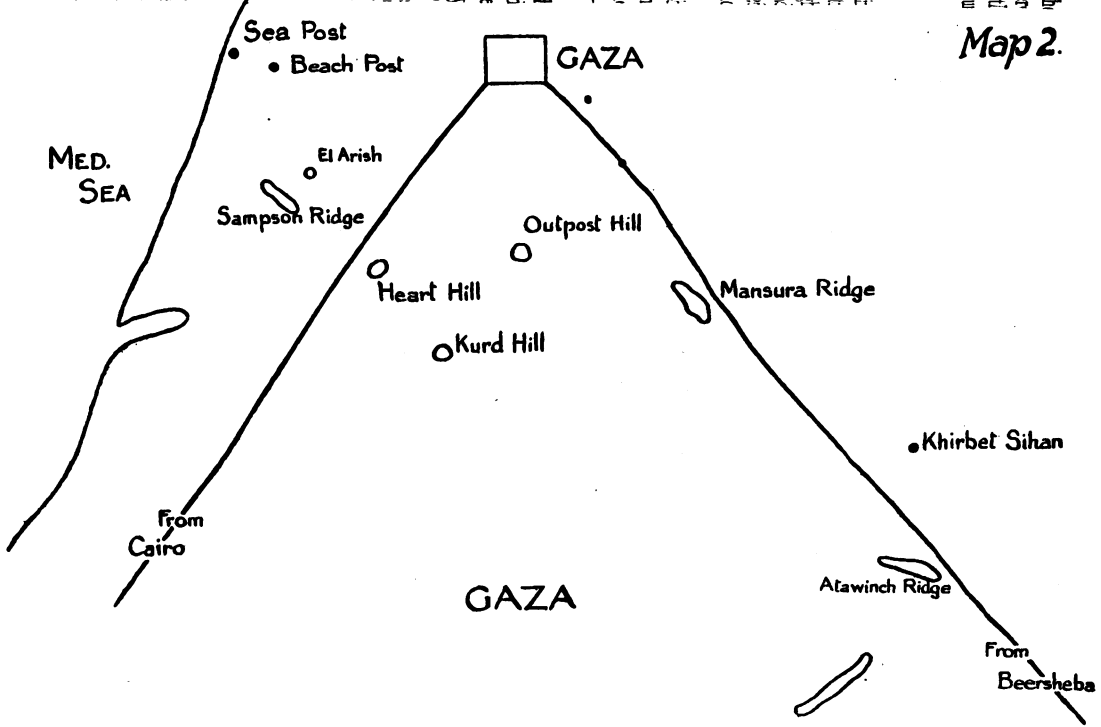

Map 2.

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Three of the 52nd Division tanks went into action. One fell into a gully, another received a direct hit, while the third was successful, despite intense machine-gun fire, in its task of assisting the infantry to capture Outpost Hill, but they were evicted by a counter-attack.

One of the two tanks with the 53rd was unable to proceed because of a broken track. The other, the "Tiger," led the advance, captured Sampson Ridge, and proceeded to the El Arish Redoubt, but had to withdraw as the infantry could not follow it. It fired 27,000 rounds of S.A.A. in a six hours' action, and every member of its crew was wounded.

The tank with the 54th assisted in the capture of the Khirbet—Sihan Redoubt. One of its tracks was then smashed by a direct hit, and while the machine was ineffective a Turkish counter-attack recaptured the redoubt and took prisoner both tank and infantry.

The tanks engaged were Marks I and II; they covered an average of forty miles of country. Too much was expected of the few employed, and on this occasion an extremely large number of machine guns, ably served by the Turks, called for a correspondingly large number of tanks to deal with them.

7. The Battle of Messines, June, 1917.

This was fought as the first operation of a series intended to drive the Germans from the coast-line running from Nieuport to the Dutch frontier, to loosen their hold on Lille, and to open the road to Antwerp and Brussels.

The Messines—Wytschaete Ridge was heavily mined by May, 1917. The 9th, 10th, and 11th Anzac Corps (of the Second Army) were detailed to attack the ridge, and, in the order named, had 28, 12, and 32 tanks allotted to them.

An extraordinary artillery bombardment was kept up almost continuously from May 28th to June 7th;

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five miles of galleries had been tunnelled under the ridge, and twenty land mines containing over a million pounds of ammonal were exploded as the signal for attack on the morning of June 7th. So great was the combined effect of these two agents, both to defensive works and enemy morale, that but little work was left to be done by the forty tanks which went into action. They were prominent in the attack on the Oostaverne Line, occupying the ground beyond it before the infantry arrived, and by disorganizing the scheme of defence there, making its occupation easy.

By nightfall we held our final objectives everywhere, had 7,300 prisoners, and a large number of field and machine guns in our possession.

8. The Third Battle of Ypres, July-August, 1917.

In preparation for this engagement all available heavy tanks, that is, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Tank Brigades, were moved into the Ypres Salient, the 1st and 3rd assembling in Oosthoek Wood, the other at Ouderon. The Ypres—Comines canal, which ran parallel to the line of advance, was bridged by the 184th Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers.

The battle was preceded by a furious artillery bombardment for twenty-four days. The effect of the intense hail of shells was to destroy the drainage system of a district in which drainage had always been a baffling problem.

The II Corps, attacking on the right, had in front of it ground broken by swamps and woods, with only three possible approach avenues for tanks; these formed dangerous defiles.

The XIX Corps, attacking to the east of Ypres, had in advance of it the water-logged valley of the Steenbeek.

The XVIII Corps, on the left, was also fronted by the Steenbeek, across which only one good crossing

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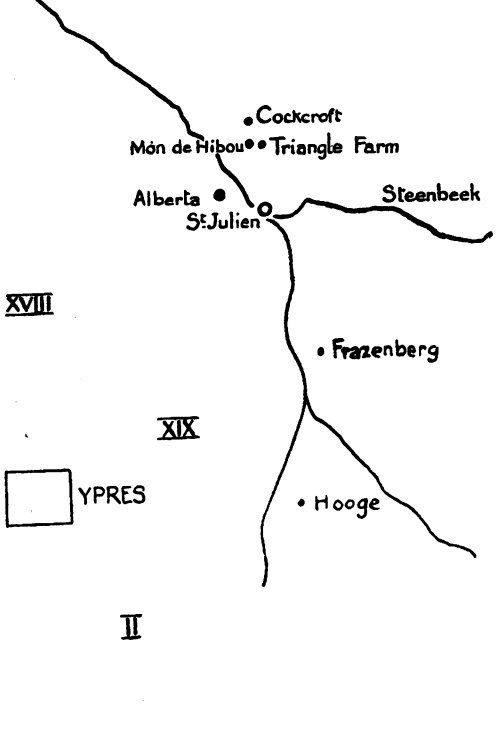
YPRES



Scale: 1 inch = 1½ mil

existed—at St. Julien—but this also formed a dangerous defile.

The attack of July 1st cannot be considered as a tank success. On the front of the II Corps, the machines were caught in the defiles by artillery fire, and, particularly around Hooge, suffered large casualties.

The tanks operating in the centre gave much assistance towards the capture of the Frezenberg stronghold, and also helped to break many German counter-attacks.

On the XVIII Corps front, at St. Julien and Alberta, the attack was materially assisted by tanks.

August 19th was the next date on which tanks were employed. One group of four machines operated against a nest of four pill-boxes, little fortresses skilfully placed, impossible targets for our heavy guns. They were situated at Hillock Farm, Mon de Hibou, Triangle Farm, and the Cockcroft. In spite of the appalling condition of the ground, these points were captured in the order named, a smoke barrage concealing operations. Fifteen casualties were sustained by the supporting infantry on this occasion; an infantry "solo" attack would, it was estimated, have cost at least six hundred casualties. This St. Julien attack partly atoned for the indifferent success obtained by tanks in the preceding operations.

9. Third Battle of Gaza, November, 1917.

After the unsuccessful attempt to capture Gaza in the spring, three additional tanks (Mark IV) were sent out, and all remained behind the lines until October, 1917.

General Allenby planned an attack on a wide front. On the left the same three divisions were to be employed, with eight tanks; on the right a feint attack was to be made on Outpost Hill. On the extreme right an

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extensive flanking attack was to be made from the direction of Beersheba by Australians.

At 11 p.m. on November 1st the first phase of the battle began. Umbrella Hill was taken completely by surprise. The tanks, in accordance with plan, followed the infantry, and were at their stations by 3 a.m. The Turkish resistance stiffened; our back areas were shelled, and when the tanks, with fresh infantry, advanced to the attack on the El Arish redoubt, a very heavy barrage was encountered. Still, the enemy was driven out of the enclosed stronghold, and the two tanks engaged here were threading their way through the maze of trenches, cactus hedges and gardens when one received a direct hit and the other was ditched. Both crews joined the infantry.

No. 6 Tank captured Sea Post, and, moving along the enemy's trenches, crushed wire as far as Beach Post. In succession it dealt with three strongholds, and was then disabled by a broken track. The crew went on with the infantry. The coastal—left—attack was successful.

On the right the Australians drove in the defence for nine miles on an eight mile front, and after three days' fighting Gaza was occupied.

10. Cambrai, November, 1917.

The tank had made its first appearance in the mud of the Somme; the craters of Messines and the morasses of Ypres had tried it severely. At Cambrai the "going" was good. Between the Canal du Nord and the Canal St. Quentin was a stretch of rolling down, little cut by shell fire, but bristling with wire.

In this engagement all wire-cutting work was to be left to the tanks, who were to assault ahead of the infantry. The attack was to be an absolute surprise. The Hindenburg Line was over 12 feet wide in places, and as the Mark IV tank spanned only 10 feet, a brushwood fascine, 4½ feet in diameter and 10 feet

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long, was carried by each machine. In each unit of three tanks, one was the advance guard, the other two making the main body. They advanced in arrow-head formation. The advance-guard tank went through the wire up to the enemy line, and turned to the left on our side of it. The left-hand main body tank advanced, dropped its fascine in the first trench and crossed, then turning to the left along the trench. The other main body tank crossed by the fascine of the first, advanced to the support line, crossed by means of its own fascine, and turned to the left. The advance-guard tank then returned, crossed the first trench by means of the fascine already there, and then, joined by the left-hand main body machine, crossed the support line. All three were then beyond the enemy support line, still with one fascine in hand.

The Third Army comprised six infantry divisions, nine Tank battalions, one cavalry corps, and 1,000 guns. Its object was to break the enemy lines between the two canals, to occupy Cambrai, Bourlon Wood and the passages over the Sensee River, to move towards Valenciennes.

The main artificial features to be overcome were three—the Hindenburg Line, its Support Line, and the Beaurevoir Line. The natural obstacles were (1) Bourlon Hill and Havrincourt Ridge, between the two canals, and (2) the Rumilly—Seranvillers Ridge, lying north of the Canal St. Quentin and parallel to it. To obtain possession of this ridge, it was necessary for us to hold the bridges at Marcoing and Masnieres, as possession of the ridge was necessary for the occupation of Bourlon to be possible.

At 6.20 a.m. on November 20th the tank battle began, the three Tank Brigades involved, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd, following the tactics specified above. Protected by smoke barrages, they moved across the German trenches, smashing machine guns and forcing the hostile infantry to seek protection below ground.

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Close behind the tanks our infantry followed. Both the main system of the Hindenburg Line and its outer defences were speedily over-run, and the assault of the Support Line followed. Here a stubborn resistance was met. At Flesquieres the 51st Highland Division was held up. As its supporting tanks topped the crest they came under direct artillery fire, and suffered heavy losses. No less than sixteen machines were knocked out by a single field gun served single-handed by a German officer.

On the left the 1st Brigade with its infantry advanced four and a half miles to Anneux. On the extreme right the main road bridge at Masnieres was partially destroyed by the enemy, and the first tank to attempt to cross wrecked it completely. Sunken roads impeded the artillery, and the Rumilly—Seranvillers Ridge remained unoccupied by us. Still, during the first day's fighting 5,000 prisoners had been taken and 100 guns captured or destroyed, together with much war material.

On November 23rd the 40th Division, assisted by thirty-four tanks, captured Bourlon Wood. The tanks pressed on to the village, but our infantry was too exhausted to hold it. On the 30th the 2nd Tank Brigade did very fine work in breaking a dangerous counter-attack in the Villers-Guislain area.

Brilliant results were associated with an incomplete realization of the full programme. In connection with the Tank Corps, three factors operated to cause such a result. They were—

1. The two canals made possible only a narrow base on which to attack.
2. The tanks employed were of the slow—Mark IV—type.
3. No reserves were left.

It was also demonstrated that bridging tanks and swift fighting machines were of prime necessity.

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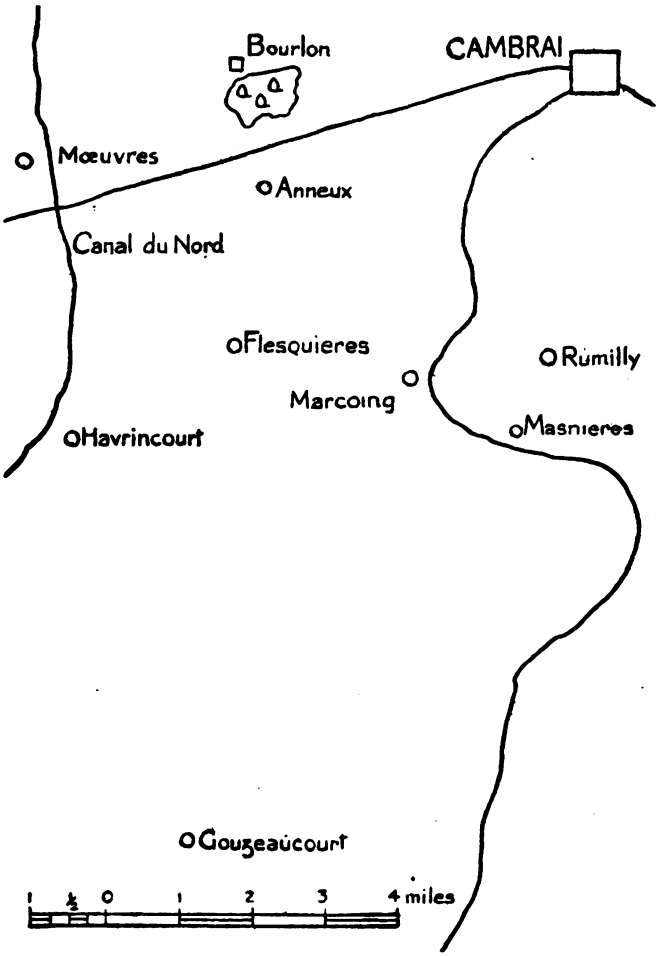

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Major-General J. E. Capper, Director-General of the Tank Corps, issued a most complimentary order after Cambrai, in which references were made to "the great success attained by the Corps," and to "the courage and skill shown by all ranks in action."

11. Tank Auxiliary Services.

During the period under review, while the Tank Corps had been fighting, a network of organization had been set up in England. This led to increased production, the Metropolitan Carriage and Wagon Company being particularly prominent among manufacturing centres.

Before the Tanks fought their next battle, the Mark V came into existence, and a unit of armoured cars was formed for rapid work on good roads. Whippet tanks had already made their appearance. A small cadre of salvage tanks and of special infantry supply tanks was to be introduced. Salvage tanks were usually Mark IV machines on which special gear, such as winches and small cranes, had been fitted for hoisting wrecks out of mud, or for towing. The supply tanks, two of which could carry complete supplies for an infantry brigade for one day, were also Mark IV machines, fitted with very large sponsons. To make them light, they were not so completely armoured as the fighting tanks. The gun carrier tank was one with an elongated tail in the form of a platform, on which a 60-pounder gun or a 6-inch howitzer could be carried and fired.

Field Maintenance Companies had been formed to carry out salvage work. The services of skilled men were economized by concentrating all repair work in Central Workshops. These were established at Teneur, Central Stores being situated at Erin, about one and a half miles away. Gunnery and Tank Driving Schools were set up, the former at Merlincourt,

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the latter moving from Wailly to Aveluy, near Albert.

The Wool Training Centre expanded considerably under the command of Brigadier-General E. B. Mathew-Lannowe, D.S.O.; and a reinforcement depot was established in France, its duty being to receive and train all reinforcements and to feed the fighting battalions. It was first stationed at Humerceuil, then at Erin, and eventually at Mers, near Le Treport. A seaside Rest Camp was set up at Merlimont.

On August 1st, 1918, a new sub-branch of the Directorship of Staff Duties (S.D.7) was constituted to deal with Tank Administration generally, superseding the Tank Directorate created in May, 1917.

12. Second Battle of the Somme, March, 1918.

In February the five Brigades of Tanks were scattered along a sixty mile line, running from near Roisel to just south of Bethune. On March 21st the great German offensive began. Tremendously heavy artillery fire was opened, being followed by "soft-spot" tactics—that is, knots of German infantry penetrated vulnerable points in our line, and then overwhelmed our infantry from the rear and flanks. During the second Somme battle the general plan was that the tanks should co-operate with reserve troops in counter-attacks against tactical points. Communications were so disorganized that a good deal of initiative had to be displayed by all ranks, and some extraordinarily fine individual work was done by Tankmen.

On March 22nd a most successful action was fought by the 2nd Tank Brigade. The enemy had pierced our line and was advancing towards Beugny. No infantry could be spared to support the Tanks. During the action a German field battery was put out of action, and heavy losses inflicted on entrenched infantry by means of enfilading fire The enemy were driven back

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to their original line, and our infantry reoccupied their own line. Seventeen tanks out of thirty operating were disabled, and 70 per cent. of the crews became casualties.

Many machines were lost during the retreat and the fighting, and two battalions, the 5th and the 9th, went into action as machine gun battalions.

On March 26th the Whippet tanks made their entry into action. Twelve of the 3rd Tank Battalion were sent from Bray to investigate the situation at Colincamps village. Coincident with their arrival, groups of German infantry advanced on the village, were engaged by surprise, and bolted. The Whippets then patrolled the road towards Serre and returned in safety.

18. Villers-Bretonneux, April 24th, 1918.

The great spring offensive of the Germans received its definite check during the attack made by them on Villers-Bretonneux. The action is of note because of two remarkable incidents in tank warfare.

The enemy broke through our line at Cachy, accompanied by three tanks; these were larger and heavier than our machines. Three tanks of the 1st Brigade happened to be situated at the spot chosen by the German tanks to attack. Two of these, females, and therefore armed only with machine guns, were knocked out by shells from the hostile tanks. Our one male tank, under Lieutenant Mitchell, engaged the three, and in three successive rounds scored three direct hits with a 6-pounder on one tank. This machine fell into a sandpit, and the British tank then turned its attention to the other two. These had not waited long after witnessing the discomfiture of their companion, and had fled.

Half an hour later, at 10.30 a.m., seven Whippets of the 3rd Battalion advanced from a position north of Cachy to attack a ridge between Villers-Bretonneux

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and Hangard Wood. The ridge was held by machine-gun groups concealed in shell-holes, while on the eastern slope two German battalions were forming in the open to attack. The Whippets destroyed all machine-gun nests, and then moved rapidly against the infantry. These, with no cover, were shot down in their ranks, over 400 being killed and wounded. The remainder fled.

14. Hamel, July 4th, 1918.

This action marked the first appearance in action of the Mark V machine. Much was expected of it, and more was realized. The attack had a twofold object—

1. To abolish a salient between the Somme and the road from Villers-Bretonneux to Warfusee.
2. To give the Australians confidence in the tank.

Hamel village and Hamel Wood—on Hamel spur—were two prominent points in the area to be attacked. An artillery barrage and smoke screens figured in the opening phases of the attack. Machine-gun nests were common.

As the barrage lifted, the tanks and infantry moved forward. In many instances the German guns were run over and their detachments crushed by the Mark V, which demonstrated its good manœuvring qualities. All objectives were reached at the appointed times; all were taken. Excellent co-operation existed between Australians and tanks. In addition to their killed, the enemy lost 1,500 men. Our casualties were just under 700.

15. Moreuil, July 17th, 1918.

This action is of special interest because it is the only one in which large numbers of our tanks operated with the French Army. The 9th Tank Battalion was engaged

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Badge of 3rd French Division presented to 9th Tank Battalion in commemoration of comradeship in action at Moreuil, July, 1918.

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The operation was a surprise one to the enemy; its immediate object, the occupation of St. Ribert Wood. After an intense but brief artillery fire, the main objectives were to be encircled and then "mopped up."

After the preliminary bombardment, the tanks advanced ahead of the infantry, clearing Arrachis Wood and taking the village of Sauvillers. Sauvillers Wood was then encircled by tanks and French infantry, but while the machines were waiting for the infantry to get into touch with them, six tanks were put out of action by direct hits from a battery near St. Ribert Wood. An attack on Harpon Wood, improvised on the spot by the commanders of the 51st Infantry and "B" Company Tanks, was entirely successful.

By evening all objectives had been gained. Prisoners totalled over 1,800, and there was a large "bag" of trench mortars and machine guns. In token of its appreciation, the French Third Division presented its badge to the men of the 9th Tank Battalion.

16. Amiens, August 8th, 1918.

The Fourth Army was given the task of attacking the Amiens Salient, and twelve Tank battalions were allotted to assist. Of these, the 3rd and 6th were equipped with 48 Whippets each; the 1st and 15th with 36 Mark V* machines; the remainder with 36 fighting Mark V tanks each.

As at Cambrai, the tanks were to open the attack, no artillery bombardment being employed. The work of the gunners was to establish a barrage, engage in counter-battery work, and to advance to the support of the attacking infantry. Our troops engaged comprised the Canadian Corps, the Australian Corps, the III Corps, and the Cavalry Corps.

Out of 420 machines, 415 went into action—a triumph for the Tank Corps. The surprise attack met

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with instant success. With the III Corps on the left, many tanks were put out of action by artillery fire, chiefly from Chipilly Ridge, but south of the Somme all objectives were taken up to time, 16,000 prisoners and 200 guns being captured.

On August 9th much trouble was experienced by tanks operating around the Chipilly Woods, from which an intense machine-gun fire held up our attack. Five machines were put out of action before the area was cleared.

South of the Somme the attack was continued with success, an action around Framerville standing out prominently as an example of the good results obtained from close tank-infantry co-operation.

The tanks attached to the Cavalry Corps were brought into action too late to be of service, but armoured cars, moving rapidly east along the main road, did much to complete the demoralization of the enemy.

On August 11th ten tanks of the 2nd Battalion assisted the 1st Australian Division to capture Lihons.

In four days 638 tanks had been in action; 480 of these had to be handed over to salvage, and most of the remainder required overhauling. The enemy lost 22,000 men and 400 guns—big punishment. But the greater victory was in the fact that a staggering blow had been given to German morale, for on an eleven mile front, we had advanced to a depth of nearly seven miles.

"Musical Box" was a Whippet tank of "B" Company, 6th Battalion, working with the Cavalry Corps. After passing through the 2nd Australian Division near Villers-Bretonneux, it became isolated, the other whippets being ditched. Lieutenant C. B. Arnold, its commander, saw two Mark V tanks knocked out by a four-gun battery, and he took "Musical Box" diagonally across the front of the battery without sustaining injury, then worked round a belt of trees to

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take the battery in rear. The thirty gunners tried to run away, but all were shot. Proceeding eastwards, two of our cavalry patrols were rescued from parties of German riflemen. Lieutenant Arnold then reached a valley between Bayonvillers and Harbonnieres, in which was a German hutted camp, the men of which were preparing to retire. Fire was opened on them with good results. Moving across country, the crew engaged many fleeting targets. About two o'clock in the afternoon " Musical Box " was again advanced eastwards. The driver of a motor-lorry was shot as the vehicle he was driving was crossing a bridge, the lorry capsizing in a ditch. On both sides of a near railway, long lines of retreating men were visible, and fire was opened on them, resulting in heavy casualties. Two horsed wagons were next accounted for. A large transport park then came in view, with many vehicles moving on three roads in its vicinity. Bursts of fire were directed on these. Fumes caused by petrol leaking through from spare tins carried on the roof gave much trouble to the crew at this juncture, and when the Whippet came under a heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, the cab burst into flames. Driver Carney and Gunner Ribbans were dragged out of the door by Lieutenant Arnold, all three on fire. Carney was killed by a shot, and the other two were captured.

17. Bapaume and the Second Battle of Arras, August-September, 1918.

Towards the end of the Battle of Amiens, it was thought that Germany intended to effect a withdrawal on the front south of the Scarpe, and it was therefore decided that our Third Army should attack north of the Somme, while the Fourth Army kept up pressure south of that river.

Nine tank battalions were massed with the Third Army, which comprised the IV, V, and VI Corps. An attack was planned with the object of driving the

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enemy eastwards over the Arras—Bapaume road, and so away from the Somme area. Tanks were to operate between Moyenneville and Bucquoy, the remaining ground being unsuitable for their employment. The III Corps was to attack between Bray and Albert—north of the Somme—accompanied by the 4th Tank Brigade. South of the Somme, the 5th Tank Brigade was detailed to assist the Australian Corps in an attack on the Herleville—Chuignolles front.

On August 21st the Third Army attacked on a front of about nine miles. The first line was easily carried. Armoured cars and whippets played a prominent part in the taking of Bucquoy and Achiet-le-Petit. The second line—which contained part of the Albert—Arras railway, strongly defended by machine-gun nests and artillery in support—was more stubbornly held, and a stiff contest developed. Tanks were in the act of crossing the railway when the mist suddenly lifted, and they were exposed to a deadly artillery fire, which accounted for the majority of the thirty-seven tanks which were disabled in this action. By avoiding the areas in which tanks attracted fire, the infantry were able to make ground, and by evening we held the railway, Courcelles, and Moyenneville, and were well placed for the following and more important attack.

On August 22nd the Third Army attacked on a front of 10,000 yards, and penetrated about four thousand yards, enveloping and securing Albert, advancing to the east of the Bray—Albert road, and taking 2,400 prisoners, and some guns.

The assault opened on August 23rd, with a series of attacks on a thirty-three mile front, from Lihons to near Mercatel, where the Hindenburg Line from Queant and Bullecourt united with the old Arras—Vimy defensive works of 1916. German machine-gunners displayed great bravery, in most cases not ceasing to serve their guns until they were crushed by our

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machines. The 3rd Division with ten tanks captured the village of Gommecourt, while the Guards Division, with four tanks, took Hamlincourt. Near Sapignies, heavy machine-gun fire was met, but resistance was broken, and many prisoners taken chiefly owing to the action of Whippets. Near Courcelles, seven Whippets cut off several hundred of the enemy, and handed them over to the infantry.

During an attack on Monchy on August 25th, several tanks were knocked out, but their crews at once joined the infantry and helped to repel a small counter-attack. By this date only fifty-three serviceable machines were left in the three tank brigades.

After Bray was occupied by the Fourth Army, many minor operations were carried out by tanks and infantry in co-operation, but chief importance centred on the attack made on the famous Drocourt—Queant Line on September 2nd. This line, built in the spring of 1917, was guarded by very strong zones of wire entanglement, and was well held by machine guns. On the south, the 1st Tank Brigade operated with the 5th and 42nd Divisions against Beugny. The 2nd Tank Brigade supported the 6th Division against Moreuil and Lagnicourt. Against the Drocourt—Queant Line proper, the 3rd Tank Brigade went into action with the Canadian and XVII Corps. Opposition was weak, and all objectives were gained at a slight cost. On the next day the enemy fell back, and Whippets pushed ahead to Hermies and Dermicourt. The line had been most successfully overcome.

Since August 21st 511 tanks had been in action. During the fortnight's offensive 53,000 prisoners and 470 guns were captured—a big haul.

18. Epehy, September 17th, 1918.

On September 4th all Tank brigades were withdrawn from armies to be refitted and reorganized.

On September 17th the Third and Fourth Armies opened the Battle of Epéhy by attacking on a front

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of about seventeen miles, from Holnon to Gouzeaucourt. On the following day, the 4th and 5th Tank Brigades joined the Fourth Army. The front Epéhy—Villeret, some 7,000 yards, was carried by assault, the tanks dealing with troublesome machine guns.

On the 21st after two days' rest, the attack was resumed. The 2nd Tank Brigade operated against the Knoll and Guillemont Farm with the III Corps. Two of its machines carried forward infantry, but could not drop them because of heavy machine-gun fire. Sufficient tanks were not in action to silence the numerous machine guns, and consequently much progress was not made. After another two days' rest, the assault was renewed on the 23rd on the IX Corps front against Fresnoy-le-Petit and the Quadrilateral, nineteen tanks being employed. The Quadrilateral was a strong organization of trenches and fortified cottages, which formed the key to the German defensive position in this sector. A heavy enemy gas barrage on this occasion compelled the crews to wear respirators for over two hours. Anti-tank guns were also extremely active throughout the operation. Still, three tanks persevered, and, with their infantry, penetrated right into the Quadrilateral. All machines were then put out of action by a single gun, and a withdrawal had to be effected. We had, however, won points of observation that were needed for the next attack, and during the operation had taken 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns.

19. Battle of Cambrai—St. Quentin, September 27th, 1918.

The enemy was in retreat, but it was thought that if he had time to settle into the Hindenburg Line, he would make a strong resistance. If we attacked the line immediately and broke it, we would not only cut his forces into two, but expose his great system of lateral railway communications.

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The battle plan dealt with main sectors, covering a front of 16 miles. To the north, the First and Third Armies were between the Sensee River and Gouzeaucourt, their objective being Bourlon Hill. To the south, the Fourth Army had the Knoll, Guillemont Farm, and Quennemont.

East of the First Army ran the Canal du Nord, a stiff proposition for tanks to tackle. It was dry, twelve feet deep, varied in width from thirty-six to fifty feet, and in many places its sides were steep. Along one side, the banks had been made perpendicular. Sixteen tanks co-operated with the Canadian Corps, and fifteen of them succeeded in crossing the canal near Moeuvres, and then attacked Bourlon Village and the western edge of Bourlon Wood.

Twenty-six tanks operated with the Third Army south of Bourlon Wood, and also against Flesquieres and Premy Chapel. The attacks here were successful although eleven machines were rendered non-effective.

The Fourth Army assault on the three objectives named above was, on the first day, intended to obtain a better starting position for further action. On September 29th the attack was not entirely successful, and our exact territory was not known. On the following day 175 tanks were involved in heavy fighting. The American Corps was to secure Bony, the assumption being made that the three primary objectives had been seized. They were not in our possession, and the attack failed.

Tanks with the Australian Corps cleared Nauroy and Bellicourt, and thus entered the Hindenburg Line. As the attack on their north (Fourth Army) had been held up, they were exposed to an attack on their flank from that direction. Many tanks, on their own initiative, proceeded to the north to protect our troops by engaging the enemy.

The IX Corps attack on the right was a complete success. The Canal St. Quentin was crossed and

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seized, Magny and Etricourt being taken with 4,000 prisoners. The tanks were unable to cross the canal with their infantry, but went south, crossed near Bellicourt, and arrived in time to be in at the taking of Magny.

On October 5th an attack on Beaurevoir failed, chiefly through poor co-operation between tanks and infantry.

On October 8th a successful attack was carried out on the front Niergnies—La Targette, the 12th Tank Battalion receiving much praise from our infantry for the support given. The enemy counter-attacked from the direction of Awoingt with four captured British Mark IV tanks, one male and three female. The male was knocked out by a 6-pounder shell from one of our tanks, one female was disabled by a shell fired from a captured German field gun by a tank section commander, and the remaining two females fled on the approach of one of our female tanks.

The success of various other small operations was contributed to by tanks, the battle ending on October 9th. The Hindenburg Line ceased to exist as an obstacle. It had been broken on a front of thirty miles, on which a penetration of about twenty miles had been made. During the final fortnight of the operations no less than 630 guns and 48,000 men were taken. The effect of this great Battle of Cambrai—St. Quentin, allied with the successes of the French in the south and around Courtrai, resulted in the withdrawal of the German forces in the Roubaix, Lille, and Douai areas, and with this retreat, the whole British front was faced with field warfare.

Rapid pursuit in the open country ahead was beyond our powers, for the German Army, though beaten, was not broken. Cavalry action, in view of the splendid machine-gun service of the retreating army, was out of the question. Tanks could have undertaken the work—but we had no reserve. Since August 8th

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819 machines had been handed over to salvage, and the Corps losses in personnel amounted to 550 officers out of a total of 1,500 and to 2,537 other ranks out of a total of 8,000.

20. Battles of the Selle and Maubeuge, October, 1918.

After the withdrawal chronicled on the preceding page, the retiring enemy endeavoured to form a defensive line on the east side of the River Selle. On this front, the Fourth Army and the First French Army attacked from Le Cateau southwards to Vaux Andigny—about twelve miles. The 4th Tank Brigade was the only one in action. The chief obstacle was the river itself. On the morning of the 17th tanks had to move forward on compass bearings, because of fog. Each of the forty-eight machines engaged carried a crib—a large hexagonal wooden crate, reinforced with steel, a lighter and handier form of fascine—and by dropping these into the river, crossing was effected.

Isolated positions occasionally held out with much vigour, but in general, formidable resistance was not offered.

On October 20th the Third Army attacked between Le Cateau and the Scheldt Canal, four tanks crossing the Selle by means of an under-water bridge constructed during dark by the Royal Engineers. All objectives were gained.

On October 23rd thirty-seven tanks took part in a night attack made by the Third and Fourth Armies north and south of Le Cateau. The expected moonlight failed to appear, and much progress was not made until dawn. Tanks were then of material assistance to the infantry, both in engaging targets in the open, and in crushing down hedges.

During the Battle of the Selle, 475 guns and 20,000 prisoners were added to our already large total.

The Battle of Maubeuge opened on November 2nd with a IX Corps attack west of Landrecies. On the

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4th the last tank attack of the war was made. The action extended on a thirty mile front from the River Oise to north of Valenciennes, thirty-seven tanks being employed. The 10th Battalion tanks assisted in the capture of Satillon, of great importance because it secured the crossing of the Oise Canal. Three supply tanks masqueraded as fighting machines at a canal bridge near Landrecies, where our infantry was held up by machine-gun fire. One tank was knocked out, but on the other two advancing, the gunners surrendered, and the canal bank was secured.

From November 4th until November 11th the 17th Armoured Car Battalion had six cars in constant action, and was specially mentioned for its work in dispersing hostile demolition parties.

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THE "MEDIUM C" DEMONSTRATING ITS CAPABILITIES.

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21. Comparison of Types of Tanks.

Type.	Miles per hour.	Circuit (miles).	Crew.	Armament. Male.	Armament. Female.	Period of Use.
Mark I... ,, II... ,, III...	3½	10	8	2 6-pounders, 3 Hotchkiss	2 Vickers, 3 Hotchkiss	Somme, Ancre, Arras.
Mark IV ...	4	18	8	2 6-pounders, 3 Lewis	5 Lewis	Messines, Third Ypres, Cambrai.
Mark V ...	5	22	6-8	2 6-pounders, 3 Hotchkiss	5 Hotchkiss	Hamel to end
Medium A (Whippet)	7½	35	3	—	3 Hotchkiss	April, 1918, to end.
Medium C ...	10	70	3-4	1 6-pounder, 2 Hotchkiss	4 Hotchkiss	For 1919.

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22. Present Units of the Royal Tank Corps.

1st (Depot) Battalion, Bovington Camp, Wareham.
2nd Battalion.
3rd Battalion.
4th Battalion.
5th Battalion.
Headquarters, Central Schools, Bovington Camp, Wareham.
Tank Driving and Maintenance School, Bovington Camp, Wareham.
Tank Gunnery School, West Lulworth.
Tank Testing Section, Farnborough, Hants.
Armoured Car Companies, Nos. 1 to 12 (omitting No. 4) Regular.
Headquarters, Royal Tank Corps Centre, Bovington Camp, Wareham.
Royal Tank Corps Centre, India, Ahmednagar.

TERRITORIAL ARMY ARMOURED CAR COMPANIES:

19th A.C.C. (Lothians and Border Horse), Edinburgh.
20th A.C.C. (Fife and Forfar Yeomanry), Kirkcaldy.
21st A.C.C. (Gloucestershire Yeomanry), Gloucester.
22nd A.C.C. (Westminster Dragoons), Westminster, S.W.
23rd A.C.C. (Sharpshooters), St. John's Wood, N.W.
24th A.C.C. (Derbyshire Yeomanry), Derby.
25th A.C.C. (Northamptonshire Yeomanry), Northampton.
26th A.C.C. (East Riding of Yorkshire), Beverley.

The stations of Regular units can be obtained from "The Royal Tank Corps Journal," or the Army List.

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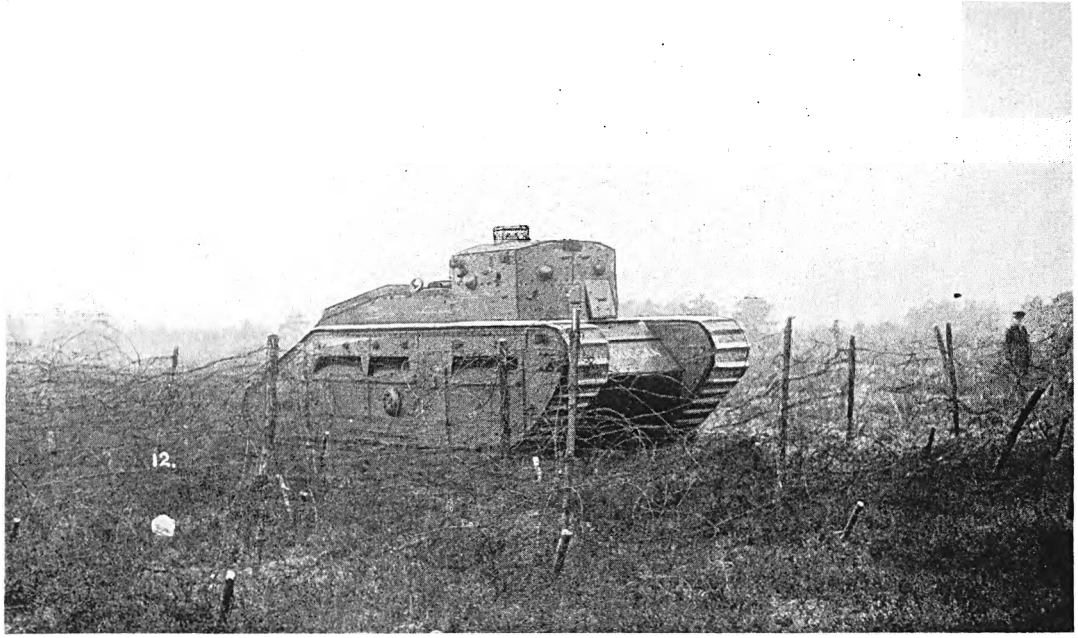

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BREAKING THROUGH THE "SPIDER'S WEB."

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23. Deeds which Won the Victoria Cross.

CAPTAIN CLEMENT ROBERTSON, 1st Battalion. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in the Third Battle of Ypres.

From September 30th to October 4th this officer worked without a break under heavy fire preparing a route for his tanks to go into action against Reutel. He finished late on the night of October 3rd, and at once led his tanks up to the starting point for the attack. He brought them safely up by 3 a.m. on October 4th, and at 6 a.m. led them into action. The ground was very bad and heavily broken by shell-fire, and the road demolished for 500 yards. Captain Robertson, knowing the risk of the tanks missing the way, continued to lead them on foot. In addition to the heavy shell-fire, an intense machine-gun and rifle fire was directed at the tanks. Although knowing that his action would almost inevitably cost him his life, Captain Robertson deliberately continued to lead the tanks when well ahead of our own infantry, guiding them carefully and patiently towards their objective. Just as they reached the road, he was killed by a bullet through the head, but his objective had been reached and the tanks in consequence were enabled to fight a very successful action.

By his very gallant devotion, Captain Robertson deliberately sacrificed his life to make certain the success of his tanks.

T./LIEUTENANT (A./CAPTAIN) RICHARD WILLIAM LESLIE WAIN, 1st Battalion. For most conspicuous gallantry in action near Marcoing, on November 20th, 1917, while in command of a section of tanks.

During the attack the tank in which he was became disabled by a direct hit near a German strong point in the Hindenburg Support Line, and at L34 a 3.6.,

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which was holding up the attack, Captain Wain and one man were the only survivors and they were both seriously wounded. While the infantry were held up there, this officer, in spite of his wound, rushed from behind the tank in front of the enemy strong point, taking about half the garrison prisoners. Although his wounds were very serious, Captain Wain picked up a rifle and continued to fire at the retiring enemy until he received a fatal wound in the head. Though bleeding profusely from the first wound, this gallant officer refused the attention of stretcher bearers in order to carry on clearing the enemy out of the strong point.

It was due to this most gallant act by this officer that the infantry were able to advance.

LIEUTENANT CECIL HAROLD SEWELL, 3rd Battalion.

When in command of a section of Whippet (light) tanks in action in front of Fremicourt on the afternoon of August 29th, 1918, this officer displayed the greatest gallantry and initiative in getting out of his own tank and crossing open ground under heavy shell and machine-gun fire to rescue the crew of another Whippet of his section, which had side-slipped into a large shell hole, overturned and taken fire. The door of the tank having become jambed against the side of the shell hole, Lieutenant Sewell, by his own unaided efforts, dug away the entrance to the door and released the crew. In doing so he undoubtedly saved the lives of the officers and men inside the tank, as they could not have got out without his assistance.

After having extricated this crew, seeing one of his own crew lying wounded behind his tank, he again dashed across the open ground to his assistance. He was hit while doing so, but succeeded in reaching the tank, when a few minutes later he was again hit, fatally, in the act of dressing his wounded driver.

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During the whole of this period he was in full view and short range of enemy machine guns and rifle pits, and throughout by his prompt and heroic action showed an utter disregard for his own personal safety.

CAPTAIN (A./LIEUT.-COLONEL) RICHARD ANNESLEY WEST, 6th Battalion. For most conspicuous bravery and brilliant leadership on August 21st, at Courcelles, and again for amazing self-sacrifice near Vaulx—Vraucourt on September 2nd, 1918.

On August 21st, during the attack on Courcelles, the infantry having lost their bearings in the dense fog, this officer at once took charge of any men he could find. He reorganized them and led them on horseback through the village on to their objective in face of heavy machine-gun fire. He had two horses shot from under him during the morning. Throughout the whole action he displayed the most utter disregard of danger, and the capture of the village was in a great part due to his initiative and gallantry.

On September 2nd, it was intended that a battalion of light tanks under the command of this officer should exploit the initial infantry and heavy tank attack. He therefore rode forward on horseback to our front infantry line in order to keep in touch with the progress of the battle and to be in a position to launch his tanks at the right moment. He arrived at the front line when the enemy were in process of delivering a local counter-attack. The infantry battalion had suffered heavy officer casualties, and its flanks were exposed. Realizing that there was a danger of the battalion giving way he at once rode out in front of them under extremely heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, and rallied the men. In spite of the fact that the enemy were close upon him, he took charge of the situation, and detailed non-commissioned officers to replace officer casualties. He then rode up and down in front

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of them in face of certain death, encouraging the men and calling to them, " Stick it, men ; show them fight and for God's sake put up a good fight." He fell riddled by machine-gun bullets.

The magnificent bravery of this very gallant officer inspired the infantry. The hostile attack was defeated.

Summary of Awards Gained by the Royal Tank Corps, 1916–1918.

Officers.

V.C.	4
C.B.	1
C.M.G.	6
C.B.E.	2
O.B.E.	23
M.B.E.	1
Bar to D.S.O.	9
D.S.O.	73
M.C.	446
Brevet promotion	14
Legion D'Honneur	8
Croix de Guerre	26
Silver Medal of Italy	2
Chevalier Leopold	1
Belgian Croix de Guerre	3
Star of Rumania	4
Rising Sun of Japan	1

Other Ranks

M.C.	1
Bar to D.C.M.	1
D.C.M.	144
Bar to M.M.	23
M.M.	604
M.S.M.	106

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Medaille Militaire	25
Medaille d'Honneur	10
Ordre de Leopold II	2
Decoration Militaire	6
Bronze Medal of Italy	6
Croix de V.M. Roumania	2
Croix de Guerre	35
Belgian Croix de Guerre	22

Army Order 368 of 1923.

GEORGE R.I.

Whereas we have noted with great satisfaction the splendid work that has been performed by Our Tank Corps during the Great War;

Our Will and Pleasure is that the Corps shall enjoy the distinction of "Royal" and shall henceforth be known as Our "Royal Tank Corps."

Given at Our Court at St. James's this 18th day of October, 1923, in the 14th year of Our Reign.

By His Majesty's Command,

DERBY.

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